

God's Chastening of a Nation  
Habakkuk 1:1-11

### Introduction

This morning we begin a three-part sermon series from the book of Habakkuk. It is a series that I have been contemplating for many years but had hoped I would never need to preach. I am actually both surprised and grateful that it has been delayed for so long. For as long as I have been in ministry, I have often pointed out the significant declines in our society. The events of the last year have shown that this nation is now past the tipping point of no return unless there is a genuine revival sent by God's mercy. The nation into which I was born no longer exists. It has been replaced with a facade that still carries the same names, but its values are radically different and even its structure has been significantly altered. It is a nation that has turned its back on its own heritage to such a degree that those who hold to the values of its founders are considered to be road blocks to the progress desired by the societal elites. Being a true Christian is now a liability throughout much of our society. National politicians and the mainstream media now call people like me who love both Jesus and my country, "Christian Nationalists," which in their view is something bad. Well, they can call me whatever names they want, but it does not change the truth, and it does not change God's sovereign plan. That is what the book of Habakkuk is about.

This book gives answers to perplexing theological questions and the despondency and despair that can quickly arise when the wicked appear to be succeeding. While what is happening currently may seem new to you, as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "*there is nothing new under the sun.*" This is an ancient problem, and the issues and answers that Habakkuk had to wrestle through then still apply today. The particulars of the situations are different, but the principles and theological truths are the same.

My goal in my three sermons on this book will be to encourage you by gaining insight into the character of our God who is sovereign, longsuffering and just. Perplexity at the success of the wicked and oppression of the righteous is common to man. That is the subject of Habakkuk's opening petition. Why doesn't the Lord hear his petition to save the nation from the evil that was occurring? Asaph deals with the same issue in Psalm 73 in which he reveals how close his own feet came to stumbling as he became jealous of the prosperity of the wicked. It was not until he looked past present circumstances to consider God's eternal view that he was set right again. Even when the wicked appear to have the victory, God is still accomplishing His will and His justice will still be upheld and it will be thorough even when it does not occur in our timings. Remember that God is longsuffering. That delay in His full wrath is to be counted as salvation for those that will repent. At the same time, it allows the wicked to heap greater condemnation upon themselves and justifies God's wrath upon them when it comes. Finally, God keeps all His promises both temporal and eternal. We have hope in the present because God watches over us. We have hope that transcends the present because our eternal future in heaven is secure in His hands.

**Author:** The author is Habakkuk who is identified as a prophet in the opening verse. His name is pronounced hăbāq-qûq in Hebrew, and means "One who embraces." Since Old Testament names are often related to what they do, Luther took note of a theme in the book and wrote that the prophet was one that embraced his people as "*one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that, if God wills, it shall soon be better.*"

Since he concludes his Psalm in 3:19 with instructions for the choir director that it was to be accompanied by stringed instruments, there is some thought that he was a priest or Levitical musician (1

Chronicles 15:16-22; Chronicles 29:30). However, that is very uncertain since non-Levites could write Psalms and music for worship even in the Temple. David is a prime example of that (the titles to many of his Psalms).

**Theme.** The theme of the book is taken from 2:4, “*Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by faith.*” The righteous live out their lives with faith in God which is a contrast to the proud, the unrighteous. That is why the book can conclude with a Psalm of trusting the Lord in all circumstances. This same verse is quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11-12 and Hebrews 10:38 as a characteristic of the redeemed. Those who are saved live lives in keeping with their faith in the Lord.

**Outline.** A simple outline of Habakkuk is as follows:

- I. The Problems of Faith (1-2)
  - A. First Problem (1:1-11) / God’s Chastening
  - B. Second Problem (1:13-2:20) / God’s Judgment
- II. The Prayer and Assurance of Faith (3) / Hope That Transcends Despair
  - A. His Prayer for Mercy (3:1-2)
  - B. His Assurance of the Lord’s Justice (3:3-16)
  - C. His Trust in God (3:17-19)

Today we will only cover the first problem of faith in 1:1-11 of trying to understand God’s chastening of Judea by the Chaldeans. Next week we will look at the second problem of faith in understanding God’s judgment of the nations. The following week we will look at Habakkuk’s prayer and conclusion with his trust in the Lord that transcended the despair of the destruction that he knew was coming.

## **Background**

As with any book, it is very helpful to have an understanding of the conditions and circumstances that existed at the time of its writing. When it comes to prophetic books such as this one, this is even more important since the particular prophecies are related to the events that were happening at that time. In the case of Habakkuk, the historical conditions give us the reason for both his pleading and perplexity at God’s answer.

I will also add here that as a general rule, if you do not know the historical setting of a book, you cannot understand the author’s intent. I recognize that post-modern interpretation of nearly everything does not care about that, but that is why they so often demonstrate themselves to be ignorant, self-centered fools. They often come to conclusions opposite of truth and reality. That is bad enough when it is an educator who ends up deceiving himself and his students. It is far worse when it is judges, including some on the Supreme Court, that cannot understand and apply documents that ordinary people in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century understood and intelligently debated. Those who care about truth will seek to understand what is written according to the intentions of the author, so let’s examine the background of this book before we dig into its text.

**Setting & Date:** The date the book was written is debated, but what is described in the text limits it to before 605 B.C. when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his first invasion of Jerusalem after defeating Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. It is a time of wickedness in Judah as described in 1:2-4 as Habakkuk utters his cry to God for help. The nation is marked by violence, iniquity, wickedness, destruction, strife, contention, and injustice. That description could generally fit the reigns of several kings, so let me go over a brief time line of kings and events so you can set these dates in a Biblical context.

King Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh (695-642 B.C.) and his grandson, Ammon (642-640 B.C.) were both evil. Manasseh is described as “*having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before*

*him*” for which God promises to bring such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah that it will cause the ears of those who hear of it to tingle (2 Kings 21:15). Josiah is the next king (640-609 B.C.) and he is a reformer. It took him a few years to start getting things cleaned up, so the early part of his reign could fit the general description of Habakkuk 1:2-4. However, the book of the Law was lost during the reigns of Manasseh and Ammon and not found again until 621 B.C. in Josiah’s reign, which greatly increased Josiah’s reforms. The charge concerning the law in Habakkuk 1:3 does not really fit within in the time frame of Manasseh through Josiah. After Josiah dies in battle, his son, Jehoahaz is made king, but he only reigned for 3 months before Pharaoh Neco, who had defeated Josiah, replaces him with his brother, Jehoiakim (609-597), who was evil (2 Chronicles 36:4-5). The reforms of Josiah only corrected the outward actions of the people who still had evil hearts which came back to full expression under Jehoiakim.

The finding of the book of the law is one clue in setting a time frame, but another are the statements in Habakkuk 1:5 at the astonishment and wonder that God would use the Chaldeans to punish Judah. This wonder is not that the Chaldeans were capable of conquering Judah and Jerusalem for as early as the reign of Hezekiah it was known that Babylon was a rising nation. It was a province within the Assyria empire at that time. The description given of them in Habakkuk 1:6-11 & 14-17 is of a people that conquer in war, and it is a personal description given by the prophet of what they were like at the present time. Some background on power of the surrounding nations and coalitions is helpful.

At the time of Hezekiah (715-686 B.C), Assyria was the dominate power of the region. Shalmaneser V and his son Sargon II conquered all of Israel by 722 B.C. and deported the nation. Twenty-one years later, in 701 B.C., the next king of Assyria, Sennacherib, laid siege to Jerusalem. 2 Kings 19, 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 37 all record God answering Hezekiah’s prayer by sending the angel of the Lord to destroy 185,000 of the Assyrian army which sent the king home. Assyria was still the dominate power and Sennacherib conquered Babylon in 689 B.C. Sennacherib was murdered by two of his own sons in the temple of his god in 681 B.C. with another son, Esarhaddon becoming king. He rebuilt Babylon in 669 B.C. and his son, Shamash-shuma-ukin became regent over Babylonia while his other son, Ashurbanipal became king of Assyria upon his death that same year. Rivalry between the two brothers results in Ashurbanipal defeating Babylon in 648 B.C., but this led to even greater instability in Assyria as various outlying regions increasingly rebelled, and then with Ashurbanipal’s death in 627 B.C., conflict among the Assyrian elite gave opportunity for even more rebellion against it. The Chaldean people rose to power in Babylon with Nabopolassar becoming its king in 626 B.C. He put together a coalition of forces with the Medes and Scythians that attacked the Assyrian heartland and had conquered Nineveh, Assyria’s capital, by 612 B.C. King Josiah of Judea had supported that coalition against Assyria which is why he had intervened in trying to stop Pharaoh Neco in 609 B.C. from coming to the aide of the remaining Assyrian army in Haran. It cost him his life, but the delay allowed the coalition to defeat and destroy what remained of Assyrian power.

Keep in mind that even the most powerful of nations are only stable for short periods of time. There is always someone else that wants to gain that power and outlying areas will resist it. The more despotic the power, the more the quest for someone to usurp it and the more vassal regions will rebel against it. Even Rome had constant intrigue among the elite as they vied for power, often with their contests breaking out into civil war, and there were always rebellions that had to be put down somewhere. Nothing is different today as you examine political affairs whether foreign or domestic.

After Pharaoh Neco had defeated and killed Josiah, he deposed Jehoahaz who had only reigned for 3 months, and he replaced him with his brother, Jehoiakim (609-597). This will play into what happens next. Though Jehoiakim is a vassal of Pharaoh, the nation of Judah had aided Nabopolassar’s coalition. After defeating the Assyrians, Nabopolassar pursued Pharaoh Neco. Nabopolassar died in August 605 B.C. and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, took over and defeated Neco at Carchemesh that same year. His attention then turned to the territories that had been under Egyptian control, which included Judah.

It was also prophesied at the time of Hezekiah that Babylon would one day carry away the treasures of Jerusalem and some of the king's sons (2 Kings 20:12-18), so that would not have been surprising news anytime after that. The ability and character traits of the Chaldeans were also already known to Habakkuk (1:14-17), so that would not have been a wonder either. What was astonishing was the timing of the conquering of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Jeremiah 36 records that even in 605 B.C. just prior to Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah, Jehoiakim did not believe Jeremiah's prophecy that the king of Babylon would come and destroy the land in his own lifetime. First, Jehoiakim was a vassal of Egypt, and if Egypt had not yet been defeated, then the Babylonians were not an impending threat. Second, though he was a vassal of Egypt, Josiah, his father, had died in a battle that had assisted the Babylonian coalition. While I am sure Jehoiakim would have expected that if Egypt fell he would have to swear allegiance to Babylon and become its vassal, which he did, he would not expect Babylon to become Judah's oppressors.

Habakkuk is a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah writing his prophecy during the early reign of Jehoiakim. Ezekiel and Daniel were young at that time, but would not begin their ministries until they were carried away into exile a few years later. The reforms under Josiah were still influencing the nation, but it was also quickly degenerating into wickedness. The Chaldeans were already a known military force of fierce nature and wicked character. It had already been prophesied that Babylon would one day conquer Jerusalem and exile some of the king's children, but it was not expected to happen at that time. The aid that Josiah had given to the Babylonian coalition should have created an amiable relationship between the two nations even if Egypt fell in power.

#### **The Problem and Plea - Habakkuk 1:1-4**

The book begins, *"The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw,"* which introduces the identity of the writer and the subject of the writing. We have already discussed the identity of Habakkuk. The subject of his writing is an oracle which he saw. Oracle is the word *mas-sa* which has a root meaning of a load, a burden, something that had to be lifted and carried. It was often used to refer to prophetic pronouncements (2 Kings 9:25; Isaiah 13:1; 14:28; etc., Ezekiel 12:10; Nahum 1:1; Zechariah 12:1). The relationship between the two ideas is easy to understand. What the Lord revealed was often a weighty message of judgment the prophet would have to carry and deliver to the people. The vision of what the Lord revealed to Habakkuk was a burden for him to carry and deliver to the people. It is a message of God's judgment of Judah and Babylon with hope given only to those that have faith in the Lord.

The first problem is in verses 2-4. <sup>2</sup> *How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And Thou wilt not hear? I cry out to Thee, "Violence!" Yet Thou dost not save.* <sup>3</sup> *Why dost Thou make me see iniquity, And cause [me] to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises.* <sup>4</sup> *Therefore, the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore, justice comes out perverted.*

The first thing to note here is that the complaint of the prophet is not so much personal as it is national, and the underlying concern is the delay in the Lord's answer to his prayers concerning the condition of the nation. He is jealous for God's glory which is impugned by the violence and injustice in the land. The prophet is appealing to God to intervene and bring the nation back to godliness, but so far there had been no answer or action. Notice the two particular pleas that are made which are then followed by a description of how bad things have become in the nation.

The first plea is a question about the delay in the answer to his prayers. He is calling to the LORD for help, a cry for assistance and intervention, yet he has not received an answer, so he wonders if he is being heard. The second plea is closely related. He cries out to God concerning the violence he is witnessing, but God has not intervened to save the victims. Habakkuk does not give indication that he himself is personally suffering from these things, but he is observing it. This reinforces the dilemma of the first plea. Why isn't God answering and doing something to help and save these victims of violence, destruction and injustice? Is God hearing my prayers? Why isn't he paying any attention to my pleas?

Habakkuk should have known better and so should we when we are tempted to fall into the same trap. Notice that Habakkuk is praying to the LORD. If you have a better translation it will indicate that this is the covenant name for God, Yahweh or Jehovah in German, and not the generic term, adoni, used for anyone in a position of authority. (This is often done by printing the word LORD in caps). Habakkuk is pleading with the God that told Moses that this was His name is "I AM WHO I AM," which is the meaning of Yahweh (Exodus 3:14). He is the self-existent one. He is the miracle-working and covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 4:23). Yahweh is the one that broke the power of Egypt with plagues freeing His people from bondage there, then provided for them throughout the wilderness wanderings though they were rebellious, and then established them in the promised land. He is the God that established His covenant with David and rescued the nation time and time again when the kings would put their trust in Him. He is also the one that would judge the nation and bring His wrath to bear upon them when they broke the covenant in order to bring them to repentance just as He promised in Deuteronomy 28. He should also have known from the Psalm 90, the Prayer of Moses, that God does not interact with time as does man for "*a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.*" God is patient and longsuffering otherwise the nation would have been destroyed much earlier (2 Kings 22:14-20).

Lest I sound too hard on Habakkuk, let me remind you that this is the common condition of man. The same questioning plea occurs throughout the Psalms (13:1; 35:17; 74:10; 79:5; 82:2; 94:3) and even by the martyrs in Revelation 6:10. We may be adults, but like children we want immediate responses to our cries. Habakkuk is a prophet, but he is subject to the same frailties each of us has. Even the righteous still have a self-centered nature. But be encouraged, for as we progress through this book the next three weeks we will see that the LORD always hears the cries of His children and He is at work even though we may not recognize it and may not like it in the short term if we do.

Habakkuk's own godly character comes out in this first prayer because it gives voice to the desire and longing for the godly in any nation at any time past or present. The righteous desire to see violence abated, iniquity eliminated, strife to cease and justice to be upheld. After Josiah's death, the nation was quickly turning back to evil.

Habakkuk paints broad strokes, but more specific descriptions are given in other Scriptures. Habakkuk's first charge in verse 2 is violence which is repeated in verse 3. 2 Kings 24:4 remarks that "*he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD would not forgive.*" That included the prophet Uriah who gave a prophecy similar to Jeremiah, and though he fled to Egypt, Jehoiakim had his strong men go kidnap him and bring him back to Jerusalem. Jehoiakim then slew him with a sword (Jer. 26:20-23). Both Uriah and the murder of the innocent are also specific cases of the charges in verse 4 of the wicked surrounding the righteous and justice being perverted. 2 Kings 23:36; 24:3 summarizes Jehoiakim's reign noting that "*he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done*" referring to his following the sins of Manasseh, which according to 2 Kings 21, fill his evil included following the abominations of the Canaanite nations such as blatant idolatry even including placing them in the Temple. He practiced child sacrifice, witchcraft, divination, sorcery, and dealing with mediums and spirits. He also "*shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.*"

If Isaiah 40-66 were written during the reign of Manasseh, then the condemnations and calls to repentance in them also mark sins that were followed by Jehoiakim. Those chapters also speak of violence and shedding innocent blood, but also wickedness, iniquity, injustice and destruction. In Isaiah 59 alone, their fingers are defiled with iniquity because their thoughts were of iniquity. Their lips were full of falsehood and their tongues muttered wickedness. There was no justice for righteousness and honesty were absent from their law suits and in the courts. Such an environment results in what is described by Habakkuk in verse 4 of the law being ignored, literally, "becoming numb from being cold," which in turn results in justice being perverted instead of being upheld, and that gives incentive to the wicked to attack the righteous through the court system.

All these things could be written about America today. I am not going to detail this because our condemnation is shown by even a cursory glance at news headlines. Abortion is our child sacrifice. Murder and mayhem increased dramatically last year with the politically elite excusing much of it because it was done by someone from an “oppressed” group or in the course of a politically correct “mostly peaceful” protest. It doesn’t matter if the victims were also from the same “oppressed” group. The wicked, including government agencies, use the courts to attack, intimidate or bankrupt the innocent. Ask Jack Phillips and so many others. If the seriously mis-named “Equality Act” passes the Senate, those law suits will seem like child’s play. Activist judges routinely ignore the law to rule by what they want it to be and that includes a majority on the Supreme Court that cannot even identify the difference between men and women. Iniquity characterizes much of the entertainment and recreation in society promoted by main stream media and big tech which at the same time censure whatever does not match their sense of political correctness. Wickedness pervades our school systems which teach lies instead of truth, fantasy instead of history, unfounded conjecture instead of tested science, and depravity as normal. No wonder a Gallup poll last month indicated that 15.9%, nearly 1 in 6, of Generation Z, our current 18-23 year olds identify as LGBT in some form. Whether that many are actually practicing such sexual perversions or not, that is a huge rise in the percentage of people that view such perversions favorably.

I point these things out briefly just to say that we have also prayed for a long time as Habakkuk did as our nation has spiraled down into greater evil. God gave Habakkuk an answer that astonished him. God has now given us a similar answer that astonishes us.

### **God’s Answer - Habakkuk 1:5-11**

<sup>5</sup> *“Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because [I] am doing something in your days-- You would not believe if you were told. <sup>6</sup> “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. <sup>7</sup> “They are dreaded and feared. Their justice and authority originate with themselves <sup>8</sup> “Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping [down] to devour. <sup>9</sup> “All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces [moves] forward. They collect captives like sand. <sup>10</sup> “They mock at kings, And rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress, And heap up rubble to capture it. <sup>11</sup> “Then they will sweep through [like] the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.”*

God was not ignoring what was going on in Judea. He already had a plan to deal with the evil in the nation, but that plan was not what Habakkuk was expecting. Having lived through the revival that came as a result of Josiah’s reign, there is no doubt in my mind that is what he was praying would occur again. A strong, righteous leader would set the nation back on the right path. That has been the prayer of many of us for our own nation. That was not the answer God gave to Habakkuk, and it is not the answer God has given to us.

The coming of the Babylonians would have been astonishing to Habakkuk as I have already explained. Assyria and Egypt had been the dominate powers. Babylon was the rising power as demonstrated by its complete defeat of Assyria by 609 B.C. Habakkuk describes very well the characteristics of the Chaldean military. They rose quickly to power with armies that were swift to capture. Nabopolassar did not become king and independent of Babylon until 626 B.C., yet only 14 years later he had conquered Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and only 3 years after that had destroyed the remaining Assyria army. Nebuchadnezzar took over after his father’s death, and within four years he had defeated Egypt and controlled most of the lands that had previously been under Assyrian control. Figurative language describes the Babylonian armies moving fast - faster than leopards and swooping down like an eagle. It is also used to describe their cunning in battle - keener than wolves. They were arrogant with the motto “might makes right” fitting them well, and since they were the dominate power, they did whatever they wanted in conquering other nations and collecting captives from great distances.

As already mentioned in the introduction, at the time of writing, Egypt had not yet fallen to them, and even if they did, it was not expected that Babylon would do anything worse than make Judah a vassal state even as it already was to Egypt. God tells Habakkuk here that the Chaldeans are God's answer to Habakkuk's prayers concerning the wickedness of Judah. God was sending judgment, not revival. The LORD also makes it clear that the rise of the Chaldeans and His use of them to judge Judah was under His control.

That was perplexing to Habakkuk and brings up his second problem which we will talk about next week, how can God use a nation even more wicked to punish Judah? Habakkuk should have already known the answer because God had stated it clearly in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 in the curses that would come upon them if they did not obey the LORD and observe His commands. God was being faithful to what He had written, and now they were going to experience what He had warned in Deuteronomy 28:49-50, <sup>49</sup> *"The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, <sup>50</sup> a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young."*

## Conclusions

I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet and there are no prophecies concerning the United States of America or anything in the Western Hemisphere for that matter. The USA has been extremely blessed by God over its years of existence, but we are a Gentile nation and not any kind of replacement of Israel. Nothing in Habakkuk can be taken as having a direct application to us.

However, the display of God's character and the principles of the application of His righteousness do apply to us and to any nation or people for He is the judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25). Proverbs 14:34 states the general principle succinctly, *"Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people."* Prophecy after prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures are judgments against Gentile nations that have acted wickedly. Psalm 107:30 even makes the general statement that the Lord changes *"a fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it."* Our nation is not exempt from the Lord's judgment and wrath.

We have prayed for genuine revival and continue to do so. We have prayed for God's mercy to prevent the wicked from gaining positions of authority, but God's answer at this point in time on that issue is one of judgment. He has given us rulers, some illegitimate, who reflect a large portion of the society, certainly not all of our society, but the vast majority. By that I do not mean socialistic totalitarianism, but I do mean the practice of blatant sin. Fornication and adultery are as flagrantly sinful as biological perversions of it (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Corruption in business is as much a cause of God's judgment as corruption in government and the courts. A lie is a lie whether passed along privately as gossip or broadcast to the world on the internet. Blasphemy is against God whether done in secret or in public. The USA is a guilty nation and even more so because it has turned its back on its heritage and the principle in Luke 12:46 applies, to whom much given, much is required.

Do not be surprised at God's judgment on this nation. His wrath has been upon us for many decades as the nation has followed the decline into depravity of mind described in Romans 1. God is judging the nation internally at present by allowing people with depraved minds to be in the positions of greatest authority. And since these depraved people do not value our nation and are following policies that will remove our ability to protect ourselves, do not be surprised if another nation seizes the opportunity to make us a vassal state of their empire.

Yet, do not despair. God has not lost control. His plan is moving forward. His will is being done. He is answering the plea for justice by judging a wicked people with people who are even more wicked, and the wicked devour one another. Governor Cuomo is just the latest example of that in action.

Do not despair. The triumph of the wicked is short lived. As we shall see next Sunday, God's judgment will be against them as well to utterly destroy them. Even in Habakkuk 1:11 God states that the Chaldeans would be like a wind that sweeps through, but then passes on. Their strength was their god, but the true God who is almighty would hold them guilty

Do not despair. God also has a plan for the righteous and He is true to His promises as we shall see in the week after that. Our trust in God enables us to overcome whatever circumstances may come resting in the peace of His promises for both the present and the future. He cares for us in the here and now enabling us to fulfill our purpose of existence, and His promise of eternity in heaven is hope that transcends all present difficulties.



Sermon Notes - March 14, 2021  
God's Chastening of a Nation - Habakkuk 1:1-11

**Introduction**

A changed nation

Encouragement from \_\_\_\_\_ God's character and the eternal view

God is at work fulfilling His will even when the \_\_\_\_\_ appear to have the victory

**Author:** Habakkuk (hăbăq-qûq) the prophet (1:1) = "one who embraces"

**Theme:** *The righteous will live by faith.*"

**Outline.** A simple outline of Habakkuk is as follows:

- I. The Problems of Faith (1-2)
  - A. First Problem (1:1-11) / God's Chastening
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- II. The Prayer and Assurance of Faith (3) / Hope That Transcends Despair
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  - B. His Assurance of the Lord's Justice (3:3-16)
  - C. His Trust in God (3:17-19)

**Background**

Knowing the \_\_\_\_\_ setting of the book is necessary to know the author's intent & interpret properly

**Setting & Date** - prior to 605 B.C.

<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>King / Event</u>	<u>Character</u>
715-686 B.C.	King Hezekiah of Judah . . . . .	Good
722 B.C.	Conquest of Israel by Assyria	
701 B.C.	Siege of Jerusalem, God's intervention kills 185,000 Assyrians. . . .	
695-642 B.C.	King Manasseh of Judah . . . . .	Evil
689 B.C.	King Sennacherib (Assyria) conquers Babylon	
648 B.C.	Shamash-shuma-ukin regent over Babylon	
642-640 B.C.	King Amon of Judah. . . . .	Evil
640-609 B.C.	King Josiah of Judah . . . . .	Good - Reformer
626 B.C.	King Nabopolassar (Babylon) gains power & independence	
621 B.C.	The book of the Law found	
612 B.C.	Babylon conquers Nineveh, capital of Assyria	
609 B.C.	Josiah killed by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo / Babylon conquers Assyrian army at Haran	
609-597 B.C.	King Jehoiakim of Judah . . . . .	Evil
605 - 562 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon)	
605 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar defeats Pharaoh Neco (Egypt) at Carchamish, then invades Judah	

Habakkuk is a contemporary of Jeremiah & Zephaniah and writes during the early reign of \_\_\_\_\_

**The Problem and Plea** - Habakkuk 1:1-4

An oracle / burden - a \_\_\_\_\_ message of judgment revealed by the Lord to the prophet

The complaint is \_\_\_\_\_, not personal, with an underlying concern for God's glory

The first plea to the LORD is a question about the \_\_\_\_\_ in the answer to his prayers

The prayer is to the LORD , \_\_\_\_\_ (Jehovah) the self-existent, sovereign, covenant keeping God  
It is common for even godly people to \_\_\_\_\_ the LORD 's delays (Psalms 13:1; 74:10; 94:3; Rev. 6:10)  
The prayer gives voice to the cry of the desire of the \_\_\_\_\_ of any nation at any time: elimination of evil  
Jehoiakim's reign was marked by \_\_\_\_\_, bloodshed, injustice (2 Kings 23:36; 24:3-4; Jer. 26:20-23)  
The charges of \_\_\_\_\_ against Jehoiakim could be applied to our own nation

### God's Answer - Habakkuk 1:5-11

God was \_\_\_\_\_ ignoring Habakkuk's prayers. He was carrying out a plan of judgment in fulfillment of them  
The Babylonian empire rose quickly with a swift and powerful \_\_\_\_\_  
Babylonian invasion & oppression of Jerusalem was \_\_\_\_\_  
God had warned in Deut. 28:15-26 that disobedience to Him would bring \_\_\_\_\_ including foreign invaders

### Conclusions

Habakkuk does not have direct application to our own nation, but its \_\_\_\_\_ do  
Proverbs 14:34 - "*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.*"  
God has answered our prayers for revival & mercy from the wicked by bringing \_\_\_\_\_ on the nation  
Our rulers are just extreme examples of our society's quest for \_\_\_\_\_  
Do not be surprised at God's judgment, His wrath has been upon us for \_\_\_\_\_ (see Romans 1)  
Do not despair, God is still in control with His plan to \_\_\_\_\_ the wicked with those more wicked  
The triumph of the wicked is \_\_\_\_\_ lived and God will judge and utterly destroy them  
God has a plan for the righteous and is true to all His promises. We are \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.

**KIDS KORNER** – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – count how many references are made to the wicked. Talk with your parents about the importance of God punishing the wicked and some of the ways He does it.

**THINK ABOUT IT** – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. How have you seen evil rise in our nation? Why is it crucial to know the historical context of a book in order to properly interpret it? What happens if you do not? What is the interaction between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdoms of Assyria, Babylon and Egypt from the time of Hezekiah to Jehoiakim? What is the significance of the book of the law being lost and then found again in 621 B.C. during Josiah's reign? What are the major factors pointing to Habakkuk being written within the first four years of Jehoiakim's reign? What is the correlation between the early years of Jehoiakim's reign and the charges made against Judah in Habakkuk 1:2-4? Who is Habakkuk and who are his contemporaries? What is the theme of the book? How would you outline the book? What is the prophet's plea (1:2-4)? Is this unusual or common to even righteous people? Explain. What is the significance of him praying to the LORD / Yahweh? How does Habakkuk's desires reflect righteousness? What were the characteristics of evil in Manasseh's reign? What are some of the evils listed in Habakkuk that are common in our own nation? Why was God's answer of chastening using the Chaldeans surprising? Why should punishment by a foreign nation be expected? How has God's wrath on America been demonstrated? Why is the current judgment on the USA to be expected. Why do Christians still have hope?